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ANALYSIS, EVALUATION, AND REVISION OF EXISTING MATERIALS FOR AN ADVANCED PLACEMENT ENGLISH COURSE. FINAL REPORT.

BY- HART, JOHN A. HAYES, ANN L.
CARNEGIE INST. OF TECH., PITTSBURGH, PA.

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THIS REPORT EXPLAINS THE INTENTIONS OF THE STUDY WHCIH PRODUCED THE "MODEL FOR AN ADVANCED PLACEMENT ENGLISH COURSE," A DAY-BY-DAY CLASS PLAN FOR WORK IN LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION, DESIGNED TO AID TEACHERS IN CONDUCTING ADVANCED PLACEMENT ENGLISH COURSES. ALSO DISCUSSED ARE THE METHODS FOLLOWED IN EVALUATING THE MATERIALS FOR THE MODEL AND THE CHANGES MADE IN THE ORIGINAL COURSE ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT. (SEE ED 012 802 FOR THE PRODUCT OF THIS STUDY--"MODEL FOR AN ADVANCED PLACEMENT ENGLISH COURSE.") (JB)

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John A. Hart
Ann L. Hayes

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Carnegie Institute of Technology

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

INTRODUCTION.

The report which follows explains the intention of the study resulting in the Model for an Advanced Placement English Course which is the product of our contract work. It explains also the method followed in preparing the materials for the model, discusses changes made in the original materials, and suggests the need for further use and testing of the model in actual classrooms.

METHOD.

The intention of the study entitled Analysis, Evaluation, and Revision of Existing Materials for an Advanced Placement English Course was to bring up-to-date and complete a description of an Advanced Placement course worked out at Carnegie Institute of Technology with high school teachers in a number of summer seminars and through several school years. Our first step was to discover from teachers what had proved to be effective in their use of the existing materials, what needed to be dropped, what needed to be added, and how the arrangement of materials might be improved. This was done by asking teachers we had worked with in the past to review their experience in the course and to let us know as specifically as they could what ought to be done.

We wrote informally explaining our project to 32 past members of the program and received discussions of their experience with the original materials from 21 of them. We chose the 32 on the basis of their recent participation in the summer seminar program, their current teaching in AP or pre-AP English, and their probable current or recent use of the materials. We were considering also their possible willingness to undertake a review for us at the busiest time of the school year, in May/June when the national AP examination was being given and all other end-of-year activities were in process. This was the month we had to use if we were to begin our revision of materials during the summer that followed; and if the teachers could find time for it, it was then that their own reactions to the course would be most vivid. We felt that the informal, lively, and detailed responses the teachers gave us were just the sort we needed for our own thinking and planning. Many of those consulted expressed interest in further discussion, and originally we had planned to have several informal meetings with them. But in practice we found that to accomplish the extensive revision indicated, we had to get it under way as soon as possible; that precluded all but occasional further questions to a few teachers.

We asked teachers to evaluate their class experience with the materials. If they had used the materials in both a genre and a thematic arrangement, we asked for preference. We asked whether teachers wanted additional detailed composition units to supplement the eight-weeks class plans which had been supplied in various forms in the past; and whether changes in theme topics were desirable. We asked about the readings in literature: should changes be made in the books read? in the discussion questions? in the format of the discussions? We asked also for general comment and suggestions about composition and literature in the AP course. In other words, we invited both directed and open response.

With the original set of materials and the teachers' comments on them as a starting point, we drew up a new model for the course. In actuality, although we kept the genre arrangement, scarcely a page of the original document remains the same. There are, however, certain sections that can be described generally as forming the bulk of the revision. These are detailed under Discussion, below.

RESULTS.

Model for an Advanced Placement English Course represents day-by-day class plans for work in literature and composition to aid a teacher in preparing and conducting an AP English course. It includes explanation of a discussion method for presenting material, a suggested reading list, questions to serve as a basis for class discussion, examination of various problems in composition, suggestion of topics for writing to correlate with the discussions in literature. The materials have been tested by the in-class experience of Advanced Placement teachers, or are the result of suggestions for new experience of the high school and college faculty concerned.

DISCUSSION.

Introductory Material. One of the most difficult problems was to try to make our new model meaningful to teachers who had never been part of summer seminars where the purpose and use of materials could be discussed and demonstrated orally. We wanted a description full enough to answer questions but at the same time readable and not intimidating. We tried to supply background information by means of an Introduction which describes: (1) how materials were intended to be used; (2) the way in which discussion was to form the actual basis of transmitting the material to a class; (3) the general reasons for organizing materials in the way we have done; and (4) the interweaving of writing with the reading in detail for the entire first semester, as well as specific suggestions for papers in both semesters.

Summaries. One of the firmest suggestions made by the high school teachers was that summaries for each day's detailed discussion be systematically added. The purpose was to suggest a focal point toward which the day's questions might work and to encourage focusing of most of the class discussion on any one or two specific questions rather than an attempt to skim all the questions. The teachers felt that summary would help them to spend time on any one question and still be able to relate it to a general point of view.

Composition. Perhaps the most complete re-examination and revision went into the composition section. Originally this consisted of an eight-week unit suggesting an approach to the teaching of composition with possibilities for topics related to the reading. The unit directed attention to certain ways of handling writing problems. Substituted for this is a complete semester of carefully developed compositional problems, with suggestions for topics related to the reading. In one sense this is simply an expansion of the original plan, but its scope and diversity result from a careful and analytical development of writing skills. We debated a similar attempt for the second semester but rejected the idea deliberately, realizing that the teaching of composition is so closely related to the pace of each class that there was no way to measure needs beyond the first semester. In fact, with many classes the types of problems approached in the first semester's work might usefully be spaced through the whole year. Although we do not give a detailed description of composition procedures for the second semester, we supply theme topics related to every reading.

New readings. We discovered from the teachers that some readings were not working as satisfactorily as they would like to have them, and that there was a major gap in the reading. We substituted one novel for another--James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man for Thomas Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge--because many teachers reported dissatisfaction with the Hardy novel; several suggested Portrait, and we thought the suggestion a good one on the basis of our own experience with introductory college classes reading that novel and with responses about it from high school students on the Advanced Placement examination. We added a comedy to the first unit on drama at the urgent request of many teachers. The request reflected the question about comedy on the most recent examination, but we felt that the examination had served an additional purpose for us in this case, since it was true that the course contained little comedy and no comic drama, and we had not noticed that. The choice of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream was made because it would fill that need and because it would give students an opportunity to examine clear and interesting dramatic structure in a play with which they were probably already partly familiar.

Changes in the second semester. Materials in the second semester were rearranged to take clearer advantage of the genre structure. Instead of spacing out the novels simply for convenience in getting them read, we concentrated on the satiric aspect of one in the first unit, and placed the other two together in a later unit on The Novel in which some of the likenesses between two developments could begin to suggest questions about what a novel is and does. The unit on satire was developed more fully, and the relations between the readings made clearer partly by changes in the discussion questions suggested and partly by supplying summaries. At the teachers' request we continued the discussion of poetry in the second semester, as we had in the original materials, but we omitted some of the more difficult twentieth-century poems and gave more specific attention to the way the second-semester's discussions of poetry reinforce and continue the discussions begun in the first semester.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

When we began to work on the existing materials to be revised we had about 125 pages of discussion questions, and we estimated a final model course of about 175 pages. In fact, when we had included descriptive and introductory material, added the daily summaries, changed the readings, completed the first semester's work on composition, and revised the daily discussions, we found that we had 204 pages. Copies of the revised materials are being supplied to the teachers who took part in the revision, and we have asked them for their further reactions and suggestions as they read and work through the course in this form. Any course is open to constant revision; we hope that the present revision and completion of this one will make clearer what it is intended to accomplish.

We recommend that the materials be made available to schools interested in Advanced Placement English courses to serve as a model for teachers in those courses, and to be further tested (and opened to further revision) by actual classroom use.

SUMMARY.

Analysis, Evaluation, and Revision of Existing Materials for an Advanced Placement English Course is the revision and completion of already existing materials prepared by college faculty for the use of high school teachers in Advanced Placement English classes. Through consultation with teachers who had used the original materials, changes were made in organization and content, and descriptive and analytical sections were added to take the place of summer seminars and regular meetings conducted by college faculty in the past. The materials now supplied in the product of this study, Model for an Advanced Placement English Course, represent day-by-day class plans for work in literature and composition to aid a teacher in preparing and conducting an Advanced Placement English course. They include explanation of a discussion method for presenting material, a suggested reading list, questions to serve as a basis for class discussion, examination of various problems in composition, suggestion of topics for writing to correlate with the discussions in literature. The materials have been tested by the in-class experience of Advanced Placement teachers or are the result of suggestions for new materials made by those teachers, and represent the combined experience of the high school and college faculty concerned.